



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Honoring Nolan N. Atkinson, Jr. and his commitment in fostering the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, Inc. (PDLG).

WHEREAS, Nolan N. Atkinson, Jr. was appointed by Mayor James F. Kenney as the first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the City of Philadelphia, a position where Mr. Atkinson will address the barriers that keep the City's workforce racially and economically divided; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkinson litigated in both the state and federal courts in a variety of commercial and personal injury matters. He is an experienced litigator in commercial matters representing bankers, insurance companies and railroads in major disputes. He has an extensive background in defending major corporations in product toxic tort matters and has represented numerous hospitals and physicians in complex health-related matters; and

WHEREAS, In August 2007, Mr. Atkinson was appointed as the first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer of Duane Morris LLP, where Mr. Atkinson developed award winning innovative programs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkinson has won many accolades for his work in diversity and inclusion, including the Inaugural Diversity Leadership Award from the American Bar Association; the A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award from the Pennsylvania Bar Association; the Legal Intelligencer honored Mr. Atkinson with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his distinct impact on the legal profession; Mr. Atkinson was named one of the Legal Intelligencer's Diverse Attorneys of the Year and was honored as a Minority Business Advocate by the Philadelphia Business Journal; Mr. Atkinson received the Honorable William F. Hall Award from the Barristers' Association of Philadelphia and became the fifth recipient of the Minority Corporate Counsel Association's Rainbowmaker Award, awarded to a lawyer who has made exceptional contributions in support of a more diverse legal profession; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkinson has previously served in government. In 2008, Mr. Atkinson was appointed to Mayor Nutter's Advisory Task Force on Ethics and Campaign Finance Reform and was the recipient of the inaugural Chancellor's Diversity Award from the Philadelphia Bar Association. Mr. Atkinson also served for twelve years as a Commissioner of Lower Merion Township and successfully petitioned to have his great-grandfather admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar Association, a right he was refused in 1847 due to racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkinson is the former chair and founder of the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, Inc., a consortium of law firms and corporations committed to increasing ethnic and racial diversity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Atkinson was one of the original facilitators of PDLG brought together by the Philadelphia Bar Association's Chancellor Edward Chacker to take a hard look at the diversity and inclusion concern of the Greater Philadelphia Area. Mr. Atkinson, along with other members of the 2000 PDLG Steering Committee, successfully established a non-profit corporation in PDLG, which created a registry of diverse lawyers and law students seeking positions in Philadelphia and a second registry of volunteer mentors for diverse lawyers; and

WHEREAS, PDLG was originally incorporated by twelve members, including Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll; Cozen and O'Connor; Dechert, Drinker Biddle & Reath; Duane Morris & Heckscher; Montgomery; McCracken Walker & Rhoads; Morgan Lewis & Bockius; Pepper Hamilton; Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis; Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young; ACE USA; and SUNOCO, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, PDLG has grown to thirty-five members, including twenty-three law firms and twelve law departments. PDLG remains a resource center for educational programs and strategies for increasing diversity as well as to promote Philadelphia as a great place for diverse lawyers to work. While the mission has never changed, some of the programs designed to accomplish that mission have. PDLG's programs have become more focused on: lawyer recruitment, student pipeline, legal community education and lawyer retention; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby honor Nolan N. Atkinson, Jr. and his commitment in fostering the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, Inc.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Nolan N. Atkinson, Jr., Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the City of Philadelphia, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.